

# **Indiana Department of Environmental Management**

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*(Text does not include verbatim comments)*

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Good afternoon and thank you for introducing me Stephanie.

It seems like it was just last week that I stood before you in Evansville to recognize the winners of the Governor's Awards for Excellence in Recycling. The past year - my first as commissioner of IDEM - has passed quickly and as I mentioned last Friday in my remarks at the Governor's Conference on the Environment, we are all a year older but it feels like we are much wiser, too. At least I hope that I am! It has been a busy and productive year. I am hopeful that it was also a year that reminded Hoosiers about the fragility of the environment and the necessity to be ever vigilant to protect it, so that it protects us.

I know that I am preaching to the environmental choir as I speak to you here today. Actions speak louder than words and your actions this past year to preserve and to clean up the environment through recycling efforts speaks volumes about your commitment to Indiana's environment.

In preparing my remarks for today, I learned that recycling dates as far back as the birth of our nation. Paul Revere, a Boston silversmith of midnight ride fame, recycled old kitchen tin ware and lead bullet casings to make a tin/lead mixture known as pewter . . .

Pewter is a product of recycling. Of course, most of us in this room have heard our parents or grandparents talk about their recycling efforts during World War II. During the 1940s, the Hoosier home front recycled more than 40 percent of its household generated trash for the war effort. They organized scrap metal and rubber tire collection drives at local schoolyards and collected scrap linens from which the Red Cross made bandages.

It must say something about our character as Americans that, in a time of great need, such as wartime, we not only do what will help our country in its hour of need but that which will help our environment, too.

Because of the excellent leadership demonstrated by the people in this room, and efforts of millions of Hoosiers, it did not take a war for Hoosiers to do what is good for their country and right for their environment during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. More than 40% of Hoosier households recycled during the 1990s either at home or in the work place. And, amazingly, . . . according to our calculations, more people recycled household and office waste in Indiana than voted in the 1998 general election! That calculation is based on the total amount of material recycled divided by an average of 10 pounds of recycled material per person, per

week. Based on that calculation, more than 2 million Hoosiers recycle household or office wastes.

This is good news for our state's environment. Maybe we ought to set our polling places next to our recycling centers!

We have made great strides in our efforts to recycle, but, as always, more work needs to be done. As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, I am proud to say that the people in this room have done their part. Recycling opportunities are available to 95% of Indiana residents but only 30% of Hoosiers actually recycle. And therein lies the challenge . . . getting more Hoosier households and businesses to recycle.

As you know, our state's goal is to reduce the amount of solid waste incinerated and disposed of in Indiana Landfills by 50% by 2001. We are two-thirds of the way toward meeting this goal. We certainly want to encourage the current 30% of Hoosiers to continue their recycling efforts but we need to get the remaining 70% of our fellow Hoosiers to participate. Consequently, all of us in this room need to work a little harder to spread information about recycling. Together, we do a lot already.

The most recent effort at IDEM at dissemination of information in the hope of increasing the numbers of recyclers is the construction of a Web-based, searchable database that any resident in the state may search for recycling opportunities in his or her home county.

We have also worked closely with the Indiana Recycling Coalition to co-sponsor the Statewide Media Campaign, the Recycle Right Campaign, American Recycles Day, a booth at the Indiana State Fair and a whole host of public education activities. The only way to get more Hoosiers recycling comes under that great public relations advice: Tell the people about the importance of recycling. Then, tell them again and, finally, tell them what you told them. Recycling must become a watchword in every American home and business.

I see my role as commissioner as one of empowering local communities to further educate their residents and businesses on the benefits and availability of source reduction and recycling. One way to do this is to provide funding to local organizations to increase public education programming. In 1999, IDEM awarded more than \$2.5 million to solid waste management districts, local governments and local not-for-profits to pay for public education as well as source reduction and recycling start-up programs, expansions, equipment purchases and school environmental education projects.

Let me for the next few moments give you some examples of the innovative programs across the state, which have benefited from this funding.

***Lake County Solid Waste Management District and the Three Rivers Solid Waste Management District*** have organized a 10-county region to benefit from the Science Education for Public Understanding Program (SEPUP) teacher training modules, and a regional workshop to train the teachers on in-class demonstrations. This project alone could impact over 10,000 school children.

**Indiana University at South Bend** has received start-up funding to establish a campus-wide recycling collection program.

**Perry County Solid Waste Management District** received start-up funding to purchase equipment for its recycling processing facility to support the collection efforts of the cities and towns in Perry County.

**The Town of Winona Lake** received funding for curbside bins and public education as it moves toward curbside recycling and a pay-as-you-throw trash collection rate structure.

And a major regional education campaign to fight illegal dumping in a 12-county corridor in North Central Indiana has received funding through a grant managed by the **Indiana Recycling Coalition and Howard County Solid Waste Management District**.

One grant project that is bearing its fruit statewide and nationally is the **Recycle-Right Campaign**, managed through the Indiana Recycling Coalition. This campaign developed professional logos and theme information to teach the public how to properly prepare their household material for recycling. The campaign material is located on the Web with free access to all recycling program managers around the state. Several recyclers from other states have noted their use of the program to support public education in their areas and have acknowledged the excellent professional layout of the information.

These are only six of literally hundreds of examples of the really terrific work that IDEM is witnessing all around this state.

We value the partnerships that have been built over the past decade, a partnership well represented in this room. We look forward to forging a new path in the next decade where we will focus on "waste prevention" rather than waste collection. The children of today must hear the message that we cannot continue to be a "wasting society," so that they continue along the source reduction / recycle / waste prevention path we have blazed for them and their environment. Let us march on in partnership and cooperation.

Thank you

I want to now introduce Angela Spittal, Governor O'Bannon's director of communications. We all know Angela; she worked for IDEM for several years and she just can't get away from us. Angela is here today representing the Governor's office and will introduce this year's award winners. Congratulations to the award winners and all of you who continue to make an impact on the state reaching its recycling goals.

Again, Thank you.